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Michael Flynn posts video featuring QAnon slogans



By Marshall Cohen, CNN

Updated 8:37 PM EDT, Tue July 7, 2020



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Washington (CNN) — In a video posted online over the weekend, President Donald Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, is seen using phrases and slogans that are hallmarks of the baseless QAnon conspiracy movement. He also tagged his post with a QAnon hashtag.

Followers of QAnon believe there is a "deep state" within the US government that is controlled by a cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles. According to the conspiracy, the cabal is largely run by Democratic politicians and liberal celebrities – and Trump is trying to take them down.

Flynn posted the 53-second clip to Twitter on Saturday, which was the July Fourth holiday. In the video, Flynn leads a small group in reciting a generic oath of office, the same oath taken by members of Congress. After finishing the oath, Flynn says, "Where we go one, we go all!" His

run by Democratic politicians and liberal celebrities – and Trump is trying to take them down.

Flynn posted the 53-second clip to Twitter on Saturday, which was the July Fourth holiday. In the video, Flynn leads a small group in reciting a generic oath of office, the same oath taken by members of Congress. After finishing the oath, Flynn says, "Where we go one, we go all!" His post included the hashtag #TakeTheOath, which he recently added to his Twitter bio as well.

These elements of Flynn's post – the oath, paired with the catchphrase and hashtag – are distinctive to the QAnon movement and are used widely by its followers, experts say. Flynn never explicitly mentions QAnon in the video, and his lawyer claims his phrasing is innocuous.

"This is absolutely pro-QAnon," said Mike Rothschild, who recently published a book examining and debunking some of the most prominent conspiracy theories. "It's the same version of the enlistment oath that Q followers have been filming themselves taking for the last week. And the phrase at the end, 'Where we go one, we go all,' is a key catchphrase in the Q mythology."

There are more than 10,500 replies to Flynn's tweet, many from self-identified QAnon supporters who thanked Flynn for his comments, used the same hashtag or posted clips of their own oaths. Flynn's video had been viewed 1.8 million times as of Tuesday, according to Twitter data.

Flynn – the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency and a retired Army lieutenant general – is now the most prominent former US official to publicly stoke QAnon conspiracies, even though the movement is based on lies and has been linked to several violent incidents.

There is also a small but growing contingent of Republican political candidates who have been linked to the conspiracy group, and are on the ballot this November. The GOP nominee for US Senate in Oregon openly touts QAnon and posted her own oath-taking video last month. She is a long shot to win, but other QAnon-friendly House candidates are likely headed to Congress.

The Flynn video comes while he is still fighting to wrap up his criminal case. Flynn cemented his position this year as an exonerated hero in the eyes of Trump, senior Republican officials and many right-wing media outlets, after the Justice Department dropped the case against him. These figures have repeatedly praised Flynn's integrity and Trump says he is mulling a pardon.



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In the parallel QAnon universe, Flynn is considered a key player and is viewed as a martyr.

"The Q community is really excited by all of this. Flynn is a hugely important figure to them, seen as a warrior who infiltrated the deep state by pretending to plead guilty," Rothschild said. "The video of Flynn actually taking the oath is, to them, total validation that they were right, that Flynn is a warrior who fights for them, and that they can be digital soldiers on his level."

Flynn's lawyer pushes back

Flynn's tenure at the White House lasted just a few weeks – he resigned after getting caught in a public lie about his Russian contacts. He pleaded guilty in late 2017 to lying to the FBI about those contacts, but later disavowed his plea and tried to get the case thrown out. In a shocking twist this spring, the Justice Department abandoned the case, which is still tied up in legal limbo.

Regarding the video, Flynn lawyer Sidney Powell told the Washington Examiner that Flynn



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those contacts, but later disavowed his plea and tried to get the case thrown out. In a shocking twist this spring, the Justice Department abandoned the case, which is still tied up in legal limbo.

Regarding the video, Flynn lawyer Sidney Powell told the Washington Examiner that Flynn "wanted to encourage people to think about being a citizen," and claimed the phrase "Where we go one, we go all" was first engraved on a bell on one of President John F. Kennedy's sailboats.

Experts told CNN that QAnon believers often misattribute the quote to Kennedy's boat because "Q" – a supposed government insider who posts online clues about the "deep state" – once said it came from Kennedy. It appears to originate from the 1996 survival film "White Squall."

Asked by CNN on Monday about the quote and about Flynn's video, Powell said in an email: "General Flynn and I both encourage love of this great country and patriotism. Neither of us know Q but appreciate the support we have received from all in our fight for the Truth and Justice ... implying anything wrong with words long ago inscribed on a bell to encourage the unity of the human race is malevolent and just plain wrong. There is nothing more to the story."

Digital soldiers

Experts told CNN that the oath is part of an effort to organize "digital soldiers" for an apocalyptic reckoning, when thousands of "deep state" pedophiles will be arrested and sent to military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay. (Flynn himself coined the term "digital soldiers" in 2016 to refer to Trump's fervent following on social media, one year before QAnon supporters appropriated it.)

"He is clearly endorsing QAnon in the video. Whether he believes the conspiracy theory is another matter," said Joseph Uscinski, a leading expert on conspiracy theories who teaches at the University of Miami. "The 'Where we go one, we go all' chant makes it clear. It is a QAnon saying. Further, the QAnon folks have all been taking this 'pledge' lately online and posting it."

Despite Powell's comments, this isn't the first time Flynn's team has flirted with conspiracies.

Many of Powell's court arguments leaned heavily on discredited allegations of a "deep state" of Democratic partisans within the FBI and Justice Department who were trying to illegally sabotage Flynn. Months before the Justice Department's about-face in the case, career prosecutors said in court filings that Powell's claims were "premised on conspiracy theories."

Members of Flynn's family previously posted QAnon hashtags. And Flynn recently published a series of columns that evoked some of the main QAnon themes, without saying it explicitly. It's unclear whether Flynn truly buys into the conspiracy, is strategically tapping into a community of pro-Trump activists who view him as a hero or is somehow ignorant of the slogans he's using.



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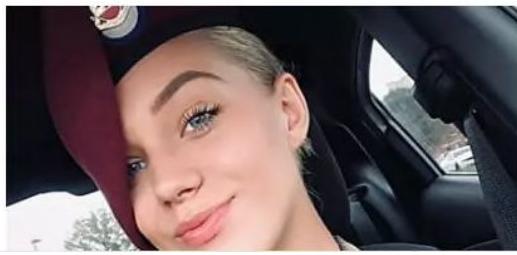
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